



Jan. 31, 2007
Testimony of Brenda Kelley, state director of AARP Connecticut
on
proposals to provide access to affordable, quality health care
before the
Public Health Committee

Chairmen Handley and Sayers, vice chairmen Ritter and Slossberg, and all other members of the committee, I'm Brenda Kelley, the state director of AARP Connecticut and I came today to support S.B. 1 and H.B. 6332.

I represent the 611,000 members of AARP in the state, but I also speak for residents of all ages in congratulating you on considering proposals today to increase access to affordable, quality health care in Connecticut.

AARP has long advocated that life-saving health care is a right, not a privilege. That all people deserve to have the health they need when they need it. And to provide that, we need to make necessary health care coverage affordable for all residents. The rising cost of health care is not only a concern but a problem for Americans and their families.

Health care reform was one of the major issues we highlighted in the last federal and statewide elections. Our Connecticut Voters' Guides asked candidates for governor and the state House and Senate where they stood on how to provide affordable health care coverage for all residents of Connecticut. Our Voters' Guides to congressional candidates who sought to represent Connecticut focused on how to provide people with affordable long-term care and whether government and individuals should share in the costs of coverage.

In this legislative session, health care reform is the No. 1 priority of AARP Connecticut.

The Legislature's timing for raising this issue coincides beautifully with a national campaign that AARP launched Jan. 16 with the Business Roundtable and the Service Employees International Union. Combined, we represent 50 million people. Of those, AARP represents 37 million.

The campaign, called Divided We Fail, presents a platform on our expectations for health care and long-term financial security. Our goal is that the future stay as prosperous for our children and grandchildren as it is for us today. Our belief is that together, America will accomplish amazing things. But divided, we fail.

Today I will focus on the health care aspect of our Divided We Fail platform. We believe all Americans should have access to affordable health care coverage, including prescription drugs. We also believe that these costs are a major concern today for adults and their families. We also believe that those costs should not burden future generations.

AARP advocates that wellness and prevention efforts, including changes in personal behavior such as diet and exercise, should also be top priorities.

And we believe that Americans should have choice when it comes to long-term care – allowing them to maintain their independence at home or in their communities with expanded and affordable financing options. We believe that Connecticut will be providing that choice under the Money Follows the Person grant that was recently awarded by the federal government.

We congratulate the legislature for their commitment to tackle the difficult challenge of making Long Term Care and Healthcare Reform a reality for Connecticut citizens.

As part of the Divide We Fail campaign, our staff and volunteers in Connecticut will be seeking the opinions of residents on why they think health care costs are so high and why it's so difficult to save for retirement. We'll solicit their opinions on what they want our leaders to do about it.

We'll be sharing their stories with you as you strive to make the positive changes necessary to provide access to affordable health care.

You have an opportunity this session to make health care affordable and available. AARP looks forward to working with you to promote bi-partisan solutions to the health care challenges we face in the state.

Thank you.

DIVIDED WE FAIL PLATFORM

We believe that the opportunity to have access to health care and long-term financial security is a basic need that all Americans share. We believe it is the foundation for future generations.

We believe all Americans should have access to affordable, quality health care.

We believe...

All Americans should have access to affordable health care, including prescription drugs, and these costs should not burden future generations.

We believe...

Wellness and prevention efforts, including changes in personal behavior such as diet and exercise, should be top national priorities.

We believe...

Americans should have choices when it comes to long-term care — allowing them to maintain their independence at home or in their communities with expanded and affordable financing options.

We believe all Americans should have peace of mind about their future long-term financial security.

We believe...

Our children and grandchildren should have an adequate quality of life when they retire. Social Security must be strengthened without burdening future generations.

We believe...

Workers should be provided with financial incentives to save, should have access to effective retirement plans, and should be able to keep working and contributing to society regardless of age.

We believe...

Americans of all ages should have access to tools to help manage their finances, and save for the future and better, easy to understand information to help them increase their financial literacy and manage their money wisely.

We stand as strong champions for the new American dream — to build a 21st century America where these issues are paramount so that all people can have the opportunity for a prosperous future. We also believe that individuals, businesses, health care providers, non-profit organizations, and government must work together to find solutions — personally, privately and publicly. We represent tens of millions of Americans and we believe that all of us share a responsibility for making our society work and restoring peace of mind to all Americans.

This is our platform for positive change and our commitment to current and future generations. Together America will accomplish amazing things. Divided we fail.

DividedWeFail.org

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